

# Straub 'conflict' claim

## Duck shooting opponents lodge watchdog complaint

By CHRIS EARL

ANTI-DUCK hunting activists have reported former Loddon Mayor Dan Straub to the Local Government Inspectorate alleging conflict of interest and misuse of position.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting on Monday said the Terrick Ward councillor "appears to be using his position on council to promote his personal interest of duck hunting."

Spokesman Tim Haddad said the complaint was lodged with the inspectorate and Loddon Shire Council and followed a Loddon Herald report where Cr Straub told the April's council meeting of benefits to the local economy from the duck hunting season.

Mr Haddad has also written to Cr Straub requesting a meeting and copied other councillors into the correspondence.

"The fact you personally enjoy duck hunting is well known. The fact you continually promote your personal choice of recreation from your position on Council, is unacceptable. It is not reflecting the views of your rate-payers, in fact is detrimental to them," Mr Haddad said in the letter.

Mr Haddad said Cr Straub's comments "followed earlier public statements made by you on behalf of the Shire, including by means of a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry promoting recreational native bird hunting."

Cr Straub said on Tuesday he had not been contacted by the Local Government Inspectorate but

"I will be more than obliging and co-operate and help where I can".

However, he ruled out meeting with Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting.

"I won't be meeting with this activist group. Their concerns have been raised and noted, I don't think a meeting will be beneficial or worthwhile for either party," Cr Straub said.

Mr Haddad has told Cr Straub: "Given your very public ongoing promotion of native bird hunting, from your Council position, you must have knowledge of the below. We ask that you please provide answers to the following as a matter of urgency:

- What percentage of your ratepayers are licensed duck shooters?
- How many Loddon residents live within 3km of recreational duck shooting? How many live within 750 metres?
- How many are attempting to work from home during duck shooting?
- When was the last health and safety risk assessment carried out?
- When was the last cost-benefit analysis undertaken re the impacts of bird hunting on community?
- What is the cost to your Shire of lost tourism as a result of bird hunting?
- What is the cost to rate-payers, of law enforcement or other government monitoring?

"We ask that council represents regional constituents who want a safer, more peaceful, enjoyable amenity."

Loddon Herald 9/5/24

Loddon chief executive officer Lincoln Fitzgerald said: "As the media release from this group states that they have submitted a complaint to the Local Government Inspectorate it is not appropriate to comment."

Loddon council last year voted to make a submission to the Victorian Parliament's inquiry on duck shooting.

A motion moved by Cr Straub and seconded by Cr Neil Beattie set out council's submission to back retention of duck shooting on three grounds:

- The positive economic impact duck hunting has upon the local community.
- The positive mental health impact of this activity for many people in our community.
- That duck hunting is a long standing tradition for many families within our shire and visitors to our shire.

In its submission, the council said:

"Many of our residents have reported that hunting allows them to connect with like-minded people and to reconnect with the natural environment.

"Additionally, hunting provides the opportunity to procure organic game meat while spending quality time with family and friends.

"As per the annual University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey, highlighted in the economic contribution of recreational hunting in Victoria report, hunters who pursue duck or stubble quail have higher social capital, personal wellbeing and

general health compared to hunters who hunt for other animals.

"In fact, the Regional Wellbeing Survey shows that 69 per cent of hunters are in excellent or very good health, compared to only 44 per cent of the general Victorian population.

"The personal wellbeing of duck and stubble quail hunters is further reflected across all categories, including average score for satisfaction with their lives as a whole, which is greater than the Victorian average," council said in its submission to the inquiry.

While the inquiry recommended a ban on duck hunting the State Government decided to continue duck hunting seasons in Victoria with additional training requirements for shooters from next year.

Council told the inquiry it recognised that native bird hunting had a long standing tradition in Victoria, dating back to the 1800s and was still a common practice for Aboriginal people thousands of years later.

The Local Government Inspectorate has been contacted for comment.